Career Transition Center
George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center
U.S. Department of State

CTC NEWSLETTER

November, 2008

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When Making Your Choice in Life, do not Neglect to Live.

Samuel Johnson

Finding a New Position As a Mature Job Hunter

by Sarah E. Needleman from The Wall Street Journal Online, September 9, 2008

Searching for a job when you're 50 or older requires a different approach than a typical search. You're likely to seek opportunities higher up on the corporate ladder and may face perceived age bias. To succeed, you need to plan ahead, asserts Lynne A. Sarikas, director of the M.B.A. career center at Northeastern University in Boston. Consider this advice to secure a new position:

Prepare mentally. Anticipate rejection and plan for a longer job search. It takes an average of 22 weeks for someone over 55 to find a new job, compared with 16 weeks for younger workers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Having the appropriate expectation level helps very much with maintaining your self esteem, attitude and energy level for what may very well be an anxiety-laden process," says Dave Opton, president and founder of Execunet.com, a networking site.

Target niche recruiters. Let executive-search professionals who specialize in your industry or job function know you're on the market, advises Howard Seidel, a partner at Essex Partners, a Boston career-transition firm. Executive recruiters fill high-level positions and are skilled in working with experienced hires. Get a referral from someone in your field or search for one at recruiterlink.com, onlinerecruiters-directory.com, searchfirm.com or i-recruit.com.

Make new connections. Broaden your networking circle to boost your odds of getting referrals and news about openings. The higher up the career ladder you are, the fewer open spots you will find, which is why making personal connections is critical.

Networking sites for senior professionals such as Execunet, LinkedIn.com, Netshare.com and Plaxo.com foster conversation, and many of their members are executive recruiters. Execunet, for example, features discussion forums, including one for swapping job leads.

Get tech savvy. If you haven't yet figured out what text messaging, instant messaging, social networking and other tech-related activities are all about, now is the time, says Roy Cohen, a career counselor and executive coach in New York. Employers are increasingly using these tools in their business strategies and for communicating in the workplace. Showing you're familiar with them may help you make a favorable impression, he says.

Curb age bias. You can address some of the common, unspoken predispositions that hiring managers may have about senior candidates -- like fears that older workers lack energy or are already looking ahead to retirement -- says Mr. Opton. Casually reveal information to counteract that, he explains. You might say, "I'm sorry I wasn't in when you called...I was in the middle of a six-mile jog." Everything from your hair to your shoes should convey your status as a successful professional, says Susan Sommers, a business image coach in New York. Covering up gray hair isn't necessary, but a contemporary style avoids the impression "that you're stuck in the past," she says.

"Network, network, network!!"

(the JSP Mantra)

You all have heard it — time and time again. Good searches are all about networking . Relationship-building is an essential skill in Washington that can enhance professional learning and pay off in broader job opportunities. Below are just a few organizations in the Washington, D.C. area for you to see and be seen in the community.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100 (an exclusive network of leading association executives) —www.uschamber.org

Greater Washington Network
www.asaecenter.org

Washington Women in Public Relations

www.wwpr.org

Women in Government Relations

www.wgr.org

Washington Government Relations Group
www.wgrginc.org

Remember, networks flow both ways. There are all sorts of organizations that can help build your network as you help others. Charity, religious and service organizations such as the Lions and Rotary clubs offer opportunities.

ATTENTION, JSP GRADS!

All JSP graduates of the October 2008 and previous classes are invited to attend follow-up meetings in Room E-2118 to discuss progress on your job search, share experiences and advice, and enjoy each other's company. The dates are:

- Monday, November 10, 10-noon
- Monday, November 24, 10-noon

"Luck is when opportunity knocks and you answer."

Anonymous

DO YOU WANT TO BE A CONSULTANT?

An Article from Wall Street Journal written by Sarah E. Needleman

Six months ago, Harriet Pea put her 18 years of management experience at large companies toward a new career in consulting. "It was a very good move for me," she says. For many professionals who want to use their expertise in new ways, becoming an independent consultant is a common jump. Despite the current economy, employment in most consulting disciplines is expected to grow more than twice as fast as the 11% average for all occupations over the next eight years, according to the Labor Department. Here are five ways to making the transition easier:

Know what you're getting into. Consulting involves more than just practicing your area of expertise. You need to continuously market and sell your services, says Howard Seidel, a partner at Essex Partners, a Boston provider of career-transition services for senior executives. "Essentially you're on an infinite job search," he explains. Consultants say they typically devote 50% or more of their time toward finding new projects and marketing. "You want to work things so you don't have a lot of peaks and valleys," says Mr. Seidel. Line up a steady stream of projects, but leave time to pitch.

Set up your business. Write up a basic plan that outlines your services, your target clientele, marketing strategy and projected income. Then talk to an accountant about establishing a business model that makes the most sense for you, says Mr. Seidel. "You want to look at what's the best structure from a tax perspective," he says. Meanwhile, build a company Web site, open a business email account, and if your office is in your home, set up a separate phone line, says Walt Maclay, president of the Professional and Technical Consultants Association in Santa Clara, Calif. These efforts will boost your credibility.

In modern business it is not the crook who is to be feared most, it is the honest man who doesn't know what he is doing.

- William Wordsworth

Befriend your competitors. Consultants often refer one another to clients they can't satisfy. "Some get more jobs than they can handle or they get a job that's not quite right for their expertise," says Mr. Maclay. They may recommend you to a client, and you should reciprocate when it makes sense, he explains. You also may be able to secure referrals by joining a consulting industry trade group. Members often swap job leads with one another through email lists. And don't be afraid to reach out. "Other consultants have been very open to sharing what worked for them and what didn't," says Ms. Pea.

Name your price. To determine a fair rate for your services, ask other consultants in your niche what they charge, suggests Garry McCoppin, president of the Association of Professional Consultants in Orange County, Calif. Cross-reference these figures with ones in books about the profession by industry experts. Then prepare to bargain. "You need to be able to price yourself such that you can indicate real value and ... be in a position to go through the normal negotiating process," says Mr. McCoppin.

Spread the word. Let everyone in your personal and professional network know about your new line of work and that you're eager for referrals. Attend business events targeted toward executives at firms that could benefit from your services. Go to the events prepared with a 30-second commercial, advises Mr. Maclay. "You need a very good elevator speech, something that will get their attention," he explains.

The Elevator Speech

(by Tony Jeary)
from 2007 Presentation-Pointers.com

The classic "elevator speech" is essentially a standard answer, crafted in advance, to the "Who are you and what do you do?" question. The name comes from the idea that you need something ready to say when you have a chance encounter with someone you need to connect with on an elevator, and have just 15 to 45 seconds to deliver your message. It begins with a brief description of what you do and the organization you work for, and often includes points or examples of special aspects of your offerings — how you uniquely provide value to clients or customers. It typically closes with a mechanism that provides a link to future contacts.

So start rehearsing so as to sound natural and spontaneous for that special opportunity!!

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